



State Emergency Coordination Center

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Situation Report for July 29, 2007 (issued @ 1500 hrs.)

07 FIRES

I. Background Information

Since June, hot and dry weather has dominated the region creating very high to extreme fire conditions. Fire Indices are at an all time high while fuel moistures are low. Accompanying the high indices are weather patterns that have set the conditions for lightning and lightning caused starts. High pressure weather patterns over the region are responsible for the high temperatures and little to no moisture. Occasional cold fronts push through the region causing severe lightning storms that ignite wildfires. Rain has accompanied some of these fronts but a return to a high pressure system mitigates any moisture that fell. The weather forecast project a continuing of the high pressure systems through August and possible into September.

Fire Restrictions and Closures: Many portions of the state are currently under Stage I or Stage II Fire Restrictions. For definitions of these restrictions, see:

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/stagel.pdf>

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/stagell.pdf>

For current information about Fire Restrictions in effect for specific areas, see:

<http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/restrictions/index.html>

Smoke: The Montana Department of Environmental Quality issues a daily forecast and discussion of potential smoke impacts throughout the state. The forecast can be accessed at <http://www.deq.state.mt.us/fireupdates/index.asp>.

II. Current Incident Situation (*Fires will be dropped from this report once they reach 100% containment*)

Ahorn and **Meriwether** fires are being managed by Bennett's Type I team.

- **Ahorn Fire** on the Lewis and Clark National Forest in Lewis and Clark County is

at 15,700 acres. 13% Containment. Personnel Assigned: 341. Structures threatened and evacuations in place. Cause: Lightning. Active running fire occurred yesterday.

- **Meriwether** located in the Gates of the Mountains Wilderness is 7,500 acres with 10% containment. Evacuations in place. Residents of Eldorado Subdivision were allowed to return last night, but are on evacuation notice. Structures Threatened. Personnel Assigned: 72. Cause: Lightning. The Meriwether Fire Burned into Mann Gulch yesterday with plume dominated fire behavior.

Fool Creek WFU on the Lewis and Clark and Flathead National Forests in Lewis and Clark County remains at 6,264 acres. Reinartz's Fire Use Management Team. Fire increased due to lower humidities. Personnel assigned: 75. Cause: Lightning

Owl on Yellowstone NP and Gallatin NF. Wilder's IMT2. The Owl Fire is 2,800 acres. 18% contained. Wilder's Type 2 IMT is in command. The fire is threatening structures. Personnel assigned: 227. Cause: Lightning. Developing a spike camp for use today.

Pattengail Creek on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge NF. 10 miles NE of Wisdom. 4,256 acres and 25% contained. Type 3 Incident Organization. Personnel assigned: 41. Cause: Lightning. Crews will continue to provide structure protection and locate contingency lines.

Garceau on the Flathead Indian Reservation. Kechter's Type 2 IMT. 3,045 acres and 50% contained. Personnel assigned: 323. Cause: Lightning. Timber and grass. Active fire behavior on the north flank of the fire. Structures threatened.

Skyland on the Flathead NF near Summit. LaFave's Type 2 IMT. Skyland is 1,000 acres with 2% containment. Personnel assigned: 288. Structures are threatened. Evacuations are occurring. Cause: Lightning. The Skyland Fire made a run yesterday, which caused Highway 2 to be closed between East Glacier and Essex.

Conger Creek on the Lolo National Forest, 20 miles north of Ovando. The fire is 385 acres with 0% containment. Structures are threatened. Personnel Assigned: 12. Cause: Lightning. Forecasted hot temperatures, low RH, and wind in the next two days will be an important test of fire behavior predictions

Sawmill Creek on the Lolo NF. The Sawmill Creek Fire is 150 acres with 0% containment. Personnel assigned: 11. Cause: Lightning. Twenty-two miles southeast of Missoula, MT. Burning in timber with individual tree torching and backing fire. Structures threatened.

NEW LARGE FIRES (Large fires are fires over 100 acres in size)

Mile Marker 124 is 3 miles east of Clinton. The Mile Marker 124 fire is 300 acres with 0% containment. Angell's Type 2 IMT is assigned. Personnel assigned: 39. Structures are threatened. Cause: Under investigation. A temporary closure of I-90 occurred yesterday due to heavy smoke crossing the road.

III. Weather

Red Flag Warnings or Fire Weather Watches:

A Fire Weather Watches has been issued by Great Falls NWS for low humidities and gusty winds.

Definitions of a Fire Weather Watch and a Red Flag Warning:

A fire weather watch or red flag warning is issued when the combination of dry fuels and weather conditions support extreme fire danger. These products are written for land and fire managers to highlight the increased fire danger.

A fire weather watch is issued up to 72 hours before the above conditions are expected to occur.

A red flag warning is issued when the conditions above are occurring or expected to occur within the next 24 hours.

Weather Forecast For current Fire Weather Predictions, see the Daily Outlook at:
http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/daily_outlook.pdf.

Fire Behavior Forecast For current Fire Behavior Predictions, see:
http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/predictive/outlooks/fire_behavior/fire_behavior.pdf

IV. State Declarations

- Statewide Declaration of a Wildland Fire Emergency

V. Local and Tribal Declarations

- **State of Emergency.** The following counties have declared a state of emergency:

Lewis and Clark
Lake
Cascade
Beaverhead
Glacier

Ravalli
Granite
Missoula
Sanders

- **Disaster Declaration.** The following counties have declared a wildfire disaster:

Teton

Gallatin

VI. Local Government Emergency Operations

- The Lewis and Clark County Emergency Operation Center was activated on July 19, 2007.

VII. Requests for State Financial Assistance

- N/A

VIII. Summary of State Resources Committed (through the SECC)

- MT-DES currently has two employees deployed with Incident Management Teams (through the Northern Rockies Coordination Center).
- One Montana Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk module is deployed for initial attack. The Blackhawk and its module are staged in Helena.
- A second Montana Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk and module is deployed for initial attack. The Blackhawk and its module are stationed in Missoula.
- A third Montana Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk and module has been ordered for initial attack. The Blackhawk is to report to the Northwest Land Office on 8/2/07.
- One Montana Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook and module has been ordered for fire support to be available on Monday morning 7/30/07 and will be assigned to Bennett's Type 1 Team.
- July 20, 2007 at 0700 the SECC was activated and staffed to a Level III status with extended hours (0700-1900) The MT DES staff Duty Officer is available 24 hrs and may be reached at (406) 841-3911.